

Thank you Senator Harp, Rep. Geragosian, members of the committee. My name is Kelley Traister. I am the Children's Education Partnership manager with New Haven Home Recovery. New Haven Home Recovery provides emergency shelter, transitional and supportive housing as well as educational programs for homeless and at risk families in New Haven, CT. I am here today to thank you for your ongoing support of programs that serve our most vulnerable residents in Connecticut. During these difficult times the need is the greatest. I would like to remind you of the imminent risks that are at hand if these essential programs lose any additional funding.

Your commitment to our programs and the populations that we serve is evident in the fact that we are still having this budget discussion in February. I know that the decisions that are being made are beyond difficult. But as each of us is faced with our own difficult decisions right now, we have to keep looking toward the future. We have to remind ourselves that the decisions we make today will impact us 1, 5, 10 or even 20 years from now. When it comes to providing emergency shelter or housing to our most vulnerable residents, we simply cannot afford to make the wrong decisions. This is why I am here today, to urge you not to cut funding for the Department of Social Services housing and homelessness line item.

In this difficult economic climate, I'm sure that I don't have to tell you that we don't have any trouble filling shelter beds. I'm sure that I also don't have to tell you that waiting lists for housing authorities are staggering and supportive housing units fill up almost as soon as they are built. The housing market in Connecticut is tight and rents are always high. So much so that it is often nearly impossible for a single mother with a single income to pay rent on her own. Often, this is what leads families to our doorstep, seeking emergency shelter.

We recently had one mother at our Careways Family Shelter with her ten year old son. We'll call her Mia. Mia and her son moved into Careways after being moving from family member to family member because, she could not afford to pay rent. Moving into Careways provided Mia and her son a chance to refocus and recollect themselves from the previous few chaotic months of their lives in a safe, supportive environment. Shortly after moving in, Mia began working full time as a CNA. Within a couple of months, she had also found another part-time job and was able to save up enough money to prepare to move out of the shelter. With the help of her Case Manager, Mia applied for Homelessness Prevention and Re-housing Program funding to assist her with the costs of moving and has recently moved out of the shelter into permanent housing.

We have many other families like Mia and her son. Unfortunately, not all of them are able to access the respite of the family shelters. In New Haven, the number of homeless children in the city is rapidly increasing. From September 1st to December 31st of 2009, (three months) we identified over 220 children from birth to age 18 who were experiencing homelessness. The impact of unstable housing on children is profound. Children who lack fixed, regular and adequate residences are three times more likely to develop a developmental delay and statistically score lower on standardized tests. For children who experience *chronic* housing instability, the stakes are even higher. In

addition, research shows a direct correlation between the experience of homelessness as a child, and the later experience of homelessness as an adult. If we do not invest in viable solutions such as supportive housing now, we are increasing the likelihood that these children will become homeless as adults, and that their children will experience homelessness and so, the cycle will continue. Not only is this cycle devastating to these children but, it is also costly and causes an increase in utilization of other services such as emergency medical services and child welfare services.

So, in the face of increasing demands and decreasing resources, what do we do? At New Haven Home Recovery, we collaborate, through the New Haven Family Partnership, The Children's Education Partnership and the Family School Connection Program. In this way, we are better able to work to meet the needs of our individuals and families as they work toward self sufficiency. But, no amount of collaboration is going to change the fact that the individuals and families that we serve need a place to sleep at night. More importantly, they need housing; more specifically they need supportive housing.

Thank you again for your time and commitment to the people of Connecticut. Please vote against Housing and Homelessness line item reductions.